

REMARKS

By this amendment, Applicants propose to rewrite claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 in independent form including all elements of the base claim and any intervening claims, and to cancel claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, and 15, without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 remain pending.

In the Office Action mailed August 2, 2007, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,246,696 to Yamaguchi et al. ("Yamaguchi"); rejected claims 3 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamaguchi in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0037284 to Bergek et al. ("Bergek"); rejected claims 7 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamaguchi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,512,767 to Takeda et al. ("Takeda"); and indicated that claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.^{1, 2}

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 4, 5, 12, and 13.

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's objection and rejection of claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, and 15. Nevertheless, solely in order to expedite the prosecution of this Application, Applicants have rewritten claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 in independent form including all elements of the base claim and any intervening claims, as suggested by the Examiner. Amended claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 are therefore allowable independent claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claims 4, 5, 12, and

¹ See Office Action (March 21, 2007), at 10.

² The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

13. Further, because claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, and 15 have been canceled, the rejections of claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, and 15 are now moot.

Applicant respectfully requests that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 in condition for allowance.

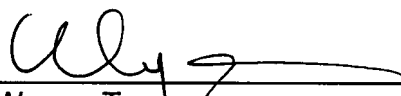
Applicant submits that the proposed amendments of claims 4, 5, 12, and 13 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were earlier claimed. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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